



NEWS FROM

Congressman

STEVE BUYER

326 Cannon Office Building • Washington, DC 20515 • (202) 225-5037



*Serving the
Counties of:*

BENTON
BLACKFORD
CARROLL
CASS
FULTON
GRANT
HOWARD
JASPER
KOSCIUSKO
LAKE
MARSHALL
MIAMI
NEWTON
PORTER
PULASKI
STARKE
VERMILLION
WABASH
WARREN
WHITE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

March 4, 1997

CONTACT: Maureen Cragin

Ryan Vaart

(202) 225-2539

**Opening Remarks – Rep. Steve Buyer
Chairman, Military Personnel Subcommittee
Joint Readiness-Personnel Subcommittees' Hearing
“Views from the Field”
March 4, 1997**

Thank you Mr. Bateman.

I want to join you in welcoming our first panel of witnesses today.

I especially welcome General Iverson. He has come here on short notice from Korea and at some degree of personal inconvenience. However, I felt it was important for the subcommittee to hear what he had to say based on the conversation and briefing I had with him with during a recent trip to Korea. That briefing impressed upon me that even Gen. Iverson, who commands an air force that is just a moment's notice from combat, exists in a world of severely constrained resources where tough choices are made every day about what gets funded and what does not. For example, when operations and maintenance funding Air Force wide ran short recently, Gen. Iverson's operations and maintenance budget was cut seven percent. The choice he made was to cut quality of life programs in his command in order to maintain his flying hour program.

Some might say about that decision, “So what! Don't we pay commanders good money to make those kinds of calls?” Sure we do, but I would argue that as agents of the branch of government charged by the Constitution with providing for and maintaining our nation's armed forces we need to understand more fully why a commander, closer to combat than most other senior commanders in the military, was compelled to make such an explicit choice between preserving his ability to carry on with his mission and taking care of his people. Moreover, we ought to understand the implications of that decision for the people in the command whose quality of life got knocked down one more peg, so to speak, by the trade off made by Gen. Iverson.

District Offices:

120 East Mulberry Street, Room 106 • Kokomo, Indiana 46901 • (317) 454-7551

204A North Main Street • Monticello, IN 47960 • (219) 583-9819

I N D I A N A ' S 5 T H D I S T R I C T

Printed on Recycled Paper with Soybean Ink

If Gen. Iverson's case of being forced to make hard trade offs was unique, there would be no reason for this hearing. Gen. Iverson's case, unfortunately, is not unique.

Take Gen. Schwartz, commander of the Army's Three Corps at Fort Hood, one of our witnesses today. His assessment upon taking command of the corps was that his unit – representing 37 percent of the active Army's ground combat power — was heading for a train wreck in fiscal Year 1998. That “train wreck” – his word, not mine – was coming because he was charged with maintaining the combat readiness for high intensity combat operations, while conducting operations other than war at a blistering pace, in the face of a budget cut of at least 17 percent. Added to that cut were decreasing numbers of personnel, decreasing money for quality of life, and increased demands to provide for force modernization. Within his units, on average, soldiers were spending 150 days a year away from their homes and families.

Since then, Gen. Schwartz has made some choices and trade-offs across the board in his command to try to avoid the train wreck and I'm sure he will tell you about them. We need to understand and evaluate them because each has significant implications for the Army and Congress. In making our decisions as to how to allocate defense funding, we need to get underneath the “topline” assessments and understand the dynamics of what is going on in the field.

Let me give you a couple of examples of the kinds of the tradeoffs that are going on within Three Corps to help avoid the train wreck. First of all, Gen. Schwartz canceled the training rotation of a major unit to the National Training Center. Such cancellations are extremely rare – and many commanders will tell you that they would not cancel a rotation for any reason. In this case, Gen. Schwartz felt the unit's Optempo was too high due to a recent relocation of the whole unit from one installation to another, and as a result the unit was unprepared to get full training value from the NTC. What was the implication for the unit of not going to the NTC? General Schwartz can answer that. However, in the larger context, as the Army begins a budget saving strategy of reducing the number of annual NTC rotations from 12 to 10, what are the implications for overall readiness and warfighting capability of the entire Army?

A second measure being adopted at Fort Hood – one of many to help generate savings that might be applied to quality of life – is the increased use of simulation for combat training. Here's how it works. In his budget, Gen. Schwartz receives enough money to allow his tanks to drive 800 miles per year – with 800 miles being an accepted budgetary shorthand measure of the resources required to maintain combat readiness. To save money, it is Gen. Schwartz's estimate that increased use of more effective simulators will allow him to get the same training benefit as if he had driven or used “60 miles” of resources actually training out in the field on ranges and in field training exercises. The “60 miles” worth of resources saved through increased simulation will be diverted to quality of life efforts at Fort Hood. The strategy has risks because no one knows for certain in a quantifiable way the degree to which simulation can be substituted for actual training in the field. Is a tank battalion that simulates 60 miles of training just as ready and capable as one that does all its training in the field? If Gen. Schwartz guesses wrong and “60 miles” of simulated training does not produce the same combat proficiency results as “dirt” training, his resource level leaves him little ability to recover. If he guesses right, his quality of life programs will be helped.

There's a complication that has developed for Gen. Schwartz's strategy – a complication that is symptomatic of growing budget pressures across all the services. Apparently, the Army has

decided that in FY 98 it can no longer pay for National Training Center rotations out of a centralized source. Heretofore, the 800 miles given to Gen. Schwartz were his to use to prepare his units before going to the NTC. Funding for about 250 additional miles was provided to units for use at the NTC. Now, it seems, units like Three Corps will be required to fund NTC rotations out of their 800 miles. In short, the Army seems to have moved the budget goal post significantly on Gen. Schwartz. The implications of such a move for training, readiness and quality of life at Fort Hood are issues that need exploration.

My fear, Mr. Bateman, is that budget pressures will continue to build beyond FY 1998 as each service seeks funds for modernization. The budget squeeze on training, readiness and quality of life will continue to intensify as evidenced by the experiences of Generals Iverson and Schwartz that I have described. A larger concern of mine is that in this already resource constrained environment, the only fungible resource remains people. We will hear later today from NCO's and spouses who can give us some insight into the price that people are paying as each service attempts to do more with less.

We and the services should also be vitally concerned about the impact on recruiting and retention if it begins to appear to people in the services, and those who are considering joining, that the sacrifices being required by the services are no longer worth the perceived rewards. If the draw down continues, contrary to the promises made by all the services that it would soon be over, I think that many people in the service may conclude that the Department of Defense cannot be trusted. This, coupled with a growing perception of a loss of benefits among a force that is 65 percent married, continuing financial strain resulting from inadequate pay and allowances, and a marginal quality of life could prompt many in the military to vote with their feet.

Mr. Chairman. This is an important hearing and I look forward to the testimony of all our witnesses.